

Recently, I received a handwritten letter from Mrs. Ann Sabata of David City. Mrs. Sabata is president of the David City Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Ladies Auxiliary. Each year the VFW sponsors an essay contest among Nebraska grade-school students, and Mrs. Sabata was so impressed by this year's winner she was writing to share with me her essay.

Isabel Small, a seventh grader at David City Public School, wrote "Our Country, America" as an ode to America's Pledge of Allegiance. Her essay won the district VFW essay contest and ultimately the statewide contest. In the midst of an uncertain and oft-times contentious period in our nation, I think Isabel's message is particularly appropriate. With Isabel's permission, I share her essay here with you:

Our Country, America

I pledge allegiance to the flag

At school, sixth graders raise the flag for the elementary school and our day begins when we recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The pledge is a promise to never give up hope and always be true to our country.

Of the United States of America

Our flag is a symbol of unity. The red and white stripes represent the original 13 colonies. White symbolizes purity and red is for the blood that was shed. The 50 stars represent the 50 states. The stars are on a field of blue. Blue stands for justice and freedom and unites the stars like a family. The family of states is called a nation.

And to the Republic for which it stands

I also pledge my loyalty to our government. It is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is formed around our constitution and is protected by our military. Our military protects the rights of every American. I hold a special place in my heart for veterans who have served our country and have protected me. I place my hand over my heart when I say the pledge to honor our veterans.

One nation, under God,

I believe God is mightier and more powerful than one state, or even one nation. God holds the whole world in His hands.

Indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Our 50 states cannot be divided! We are a map of millions of people who are treated equally. Everyone is promised the freedom to life, liberty, and happiness. Each of us should be treated fairly and justly. No one will be treated differently because of how we look, where we live or how much money we have. Liberty and justice is for all.

- By Isabel Small, David City, NE